Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PARIS 26250 01 OF 02 061356Z

43
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01

INR-05 L-01 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 COME-00 EB-04 LAB-01 SIL-01 A-01 OPR-01

SY-04 OCE-00 CCO-00 USPS-01 EURE-00 /073 W
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3923
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
USMISSION EC BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM
AMCONSUL BORDEAUX
AMCONSUL LYON
AMCONSUL MARSEILLE
AMCONSUL MARTINIQUE
AMCONSUL NICE
AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 26250

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PLAB, FR
SUBJECT: FRENCH LABOR SCENE

REF: PARIS 25540

1. SUMMARY. LABOR SCENE--ESPECIALLY CONTINUING
MAIL STRIKE--HAS BECOME DOMINANT FEATURE OF FRONTPAGE
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PAGE 02 PARIS 26250 01 OF 02 061356Z

NEWS, CENTER OF GOF PREOCCUPATION AND GROWING CAUSE

Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

OF PUBLIC IRRITATION. GOF IS TAKING POSTAL SITUATION SERIOUSLY AND SO FAR IS HANDLING IT WITH REASONABLE SKILL, HOPING TO WEAR OUT STRIKERS AND RELY ON PRESSURE OF PUBLIC OPINION TO END IMPASSE. DEBATE OF QUESTION WHETHER STRIKE IS POLITICALLY MOTIVATED WILL WEIGH ON GENERAL SITUATION, WITH FRENCH CITIZEN THE FINAL ARBITER. END SUMMARY.

2. STRIKE SITUATION AS OF NOV. 5 WAS FOLLOWING:

(A) CGT - STATE SECRETARY IS ACCOMPLISHING MAJOR FEAT BY KEEPING NEGOTIATIONS GOING FOR A TOTAL OF OVER 70 HOURS SINCE HE PRESENTED LAST GOF OFFER. OFFER IS FAIRLY GENEROUS IN EVERY RESPECT EXCEPT SALARY INCREASES AND ADDITIONAL EMPLOYEE POSITIONS DEMANDED BY UNIONS TO IMPROVE ALLEGED CURRENT UNDER-STAFFING. OBVIOUSLY GOF STRATEGY IS TO WEAR OUT STRIKERS, TO AVOID RESPONSIBILITY FOR BREAKING OFF NEGOTIATIONS, AND TO RELY ON PRESSURE OF PUBLIC OPINION TO END PRESENT IMPASSE. PUBLIC OPINION--TRADITIONALLY HOSTILE TO PUBLIC SERVICE STRIKES--IS BEGINNING TO SHOW IMPATIENCE WITH LENGTH OF PTT STRIKE, AND PTT UNIONS ARE SHOWING AWARENESS OF THIS ATTITUDE. LABATT REPORTS FROM BORDEAUX THAT INDIVIDUAL PTT WORKERS ARE RESUMING WORK EXCEPT FOR SORTING OFFICES, WHERE YOUNGER TEMPORARY EMPLOYEES CONTINUE TO BE DETERMINED IN PURSUING STRIKE.

(B) COAL MINERS - FIFTH DAY OF STRIKE BY 20 THOUSAND MINERS IN LORRAINE DEMANDING RECONSIDERATION OF PAAN TO CLOSE DOWN UNECONOMICAL PITS WITNESSED MINOR RETURN-TO-WORK MOVEMENT AND STALEMATE OF NEGOTIATIONS WHICH ARE NEVERTHELESS CONTINUING.

(C) RAILROAD STRIKE - IN RESPONSE TO CGT-CFDT ORDERS, SNCF EMPLOYEES BEGAN NOV. 5 24-HOUR ROUNDS OF STRIKE BY REGION. FO ACTIVELY CAMPAIGNED AGAINST STRIKE IN LIGHT OF GOF DECISION TO DOUBLE RATE OF WAGE INCREASE TO 4 PERCENT DUE UNDER 1974 CONTRACT. STRIKE, HOWEVER, 80 PERCENT SUCCESSFUL.
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(D) DAY OF ACTION - IN ORDER TO ENHANCE IMPACT OF ROUTINE "DAY OF ACTION" CALLED BY CGT-CFDT-FEN, UTILITY EMPLOYEES DOMINATED BY CGT CUT ELECTRICITY IN PARIS AND MAIN CITIES IN FRANCE FOR SHORT TIME MORNING OF NOV. 5. THIS FULL DEMONSTRATION IN PARIS WAS IMPRESSIVE BY LARGE TURNOUT, MOSTLY PTT STRIKERS.

Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

3. UNION LEADERS CAUGHT IN RACE.

(A) SURPRISED BY PTT STRIKE AND ESPECIALLY BY ITS DURATION, CGT AND CFDT LEADERS (SEGUY AND MAIRE) MET ON SHORT NOTICE NOV. 1 AND HELD IMPROMPTU PRESS CONFERENCES TO CLAIM AN EXISTENCE OF GENERAL DISCONTENT AMONG WORKERS AND TO PROCLAIM THEIR DETERMINATION TO COMPEL GOF AND MANAGEMENT TO MAKE CONCESSIONS AND TO MODIFY CURRENT AUSTERITY PROGRAM. FEN (EDUCATION) FINDS ITSELF INCREASINGLY ASSOCIATED IN CGT-CFDT TACTICS PRIMARILY BECAUSE OF LARGE PERCENTAGE OF TEMPORARY TEACHERS (AUXILIAIRES) AMONG ITS RANKS. AS REPORTED IN REFTEL, STATUS OF

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PAGE 01 PARIS 26250 02 OF 02 061406Z

43
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01

INR-05 L-01 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 COME-00 EB-04 LAB-01 SIL-01 A-01 OPR-01

SY-04 OCE-00 CCO-00 USPS-01 EURE-00 /073 W
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3924
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
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USMISSION EC BRUSSELS
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AMEMBASSY LONDON
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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 02 OF 02 PARIS 26250

AUXILIAIRES IS EMERGING AS MAIN CAUSE OF CURRENT LABOR UNREST JUST AS THE STATUS OF SEMI-SKILLED WORKERS IN RENAULT WAS IN 1972 AND THE AGITATION OF LYCEE STUDENTS WAS IN 1973.

(B) FO CONVOKED UNSCHEDULED CONFEDERAL BUREAU MEETING
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NOV. 4 AT END OF WHICH ISSUED SHARPLY WORDED STATEMENT URGING FO MEMBERS TO "KEEP THEIR COOL" AND TO RESIST DEMAGOGIC APPEALS WHICH HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH WORKERS' TRUE INTERESTS. THESE ARE TO BE PROMOTED THROUGH COLLECTIVE BARGAINING ON STRICTLY TRADE UNION TERMS.

4. GOF LETS CAT OUT OF THE BAG - STATE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC SERVICES PERRONNET AND THEN ELYSEE SPOKESMAN BROUGHT OUT INTO OPEN WHAT STARTED TO BE ON EVERYONE'S MIND, NAMELY, THAT STRIKE MAY BE POLITICALLY MOTIVATED ESPECIALLY AS FAR AS CGT AND PCF ARE CONCERNED. CGT AND CFDT PROTESTED BUT NOW THAT QUESTION IS RAISED PUBLICLY, ITS DEBATE WILL MOST LIKELY WEIGH ON GENERAL SITUATION. AS ONE COMMENTATOR REMARKED, THE FINAL ARBITER BETWEEN GOF AND THE UNIONS WILL BE THE FRENCH CITIZEN.

5. COMMENT. CURRENT SITUATION DEMONSTRATES ONCE AGAIN UNPREDICTABILITY OF RANK AND FILE, AND COMPLEXITY AND DIVERGENCE OF TRADE UNION MOTIVATION. GOF IS GIVING EVERY EVIDENCE OF TAKING SITUATION SERIOUSLY AND HANDLING IT WITH REASONABLE SKILL TO AVOID MAKING UNIONS AND LABOR IN GENERAL THE UNDERDOG.

6. ALLEGED POLITICAL MOTIVATION BY CGT-PCF MAY NOT BE EXCLUSIVELY DIRECTED AGAINST GOF AND EXPECTED CHANCE OF SUCCESS OF GOF AUSTERITY PROGRAM. IT MAY WELL BE DIRECTED ALSO AGAINST THE SOCIALISTS TO REMIND THEM THAT CGT-PCF STILL CONTROL IMPORTANT SEGMENT OF ORGANIZED LABOR.

Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

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7. GAUCHIST ELEMENT IN PTT CONTINUES TO EXERCISE
INFLUENCE OVER MAIL SORTING EMPLOYEES AND TO PRESENT
A PROBLEM NOT ONLY FOR FORCE OUVRIERE BUT ALSO
FOR CGT AND TO A LESSER DEGREE CFDT.
STONE

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EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

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